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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a program of planned change designed to produce a more satisfying and meaningful set of skill objectives for undergraduate instruction in communication. As a philosophy of communication education, interpersonal competence is based on two key assumptions: (1) that every human being is motivated to interact effectively with his environment, to produce effects on or to influence his world; and (2) that individuals learn social effectiveness throughout life. Interpersonal competence is defined as the individual's ability to give and receive descriptive feedback, to own and help others to own to their values and feelings, to experiment with new values and behaviors, and to invest and take risks with new attitudes and ideas. The challenge facing the communication educator is that of creating classroom conditions which facilitate the development of these skills. (LG)

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INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE:

A PARADIGM FOR PLANNED CHANGE

IN UNDERGRADUATE COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTION

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A teacher is a person who intends to change or modify the behavior of others. If teachers subscribe to this definition they must recognize that they can identify the problems of measuring learning only after they have decided what it is they want their students to learn. In speech communication there is now substantial support for the position that students should learn interpersonal communication, not public speaking. But what is interpersonal communication? What does one know when he has learned interpersonal communication? How does one teach it? How can one learn it? While other writers have explored the reasons why interpersonal communication is popular (Illardo, 1972), the content of prototypical interpersonal communication courses (Stewart, 1972), and the need for radical revision in basic level speech courses (Mehrley and Backes, 1972), no one has formulated a sufficient framework for answering these questions.

Interpersonal communication has been defined by Barnlund as "... the investigation of relatively informal social situations in which persons in face-to-face encounters maintain a focused interaction through the reciprocal exchange of verbal and non-verbal cues" (1968, p. 10). Interpersonal communication, then, is the study of interpersonal relationships.

This definition is predicated upon three related assumptions: (1) interpersonal behaviors define interpersonal relationships; (2) <u>all</u> interpersonal behavior is considered communication; and (3) interpersonal communication is concerned with ways in which relationships are developed between individuals.[1]

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[1]See Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967, pp. 48-71) for a detailed discussion of these assumptions.

These considerations suggest that training in communication should focus on the skills necessary to improve interpersonal relations between people. To accomplish this objective, we must first identify the basic aims -- raisons d'etre -- of forming, maintaining, and enhancing relationships. Bennis designates four such aims: (1) to express feelings; (2) to establish social realities -- to confirm; (3) to change and influence; and (4) to work and create (Bennis, et. al., 1968).

The purpose of this paper is to present an interpersonal competency based program of planned change[2] for undergraduate communication instruction, one that can contribute substantially to the accomplishment of these aims. This proposal is founded on our conviction that the greatest challenge confronting our field today is the development of theory and professional skills necessary to implement change. We believe that existing conditions are unacceptable and that planned alterations will produce a more satisfying state of affairs.

The presentation of this proposal will follow the behavioral science guidelines for planned change described elsewhere by Blake and Mouton (1964). We shall attempt to (1) describe the existing conditions which the changes are intended to correct, (2) define the goals which the changes are designed to achieve, (3) describe the techniques by which the objectives will be met, and (4) explain how the outcomes can be measured and evaluated.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The improvement of interpersonal relationships is dependent upon the ability of interactants to meet the objectives outlined by Bennis.

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[2]Procedures for formulating programs of planned change are described in detail by Blake and Mouton (1964) and Bennis, Benne, and Chin (1968).

This individual ability is at least partially mediated by the nature of the social environment (Lewin, 1951). As Maslow (1954) observed, the social climate must be favorable to the achievement and fulfillment of higher needs and objectives.

Unfortunately, present cultural conditions have been largely responsible for producing a social climate conducive to interpersonal incompetence -- the inability to effectively interact with self and others.[3] This position is based on the discussion of three questions:

1. What is the nature of the existing social climate?
2. What factors contributed to the emergence of this climate?
3. What are its effects upon interpersonal behavior?

THE SOCIAL CLIMATE

Contemporary social thought supports the hypothesis that we are living in an age of transition. May describes existing conditions in terms of "anxiety" and "upheaval" (1953, p. vii). Durkheim contends that contemporary society is in a state of flux, normlessness, and deregulation (1951, Merton, 1957, chapters 4 and 5). In a reference to Durkheim's thesis, Hampden-Turner argues that the social order is undergoing a fundamental "failure of existence" (1970, p. 67). And Brennecke and Amick refer to the transition as one generated out of a self-society interface (1971, pp. 12-17). The nature of the age, then, is one of change, one in which traditional values are being reassessed and rejected more rapidly than they are being replaced. In this interim, however, several characteristics emerge, descriptive of the present social climate.

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[3] See Robert White's (1959) early definition of competence: an "... organism's capacity to interact effectively with its environment" (p. 297).

Isolation. Perhaps the most salient characteristic of the age is the sense of isolation and loneliness, reflected in such works as Slater's Pursuit of Loneliness (1970) and Reisman's, et. al., The Lonely Crowd (1951). The emphasis is upon a distinct lack of community.

Insignificance. May's (1967) notion of powerlessness and personal impotence is described in terms of the inability to act upon one's needs with the conviction that such action would have little effect (p. 25).

Anomie. This refers to a cultural lack of significant goals or values; the characteristic state of limbo, conflict, and confusion associated with Durkheim's (1951; Merton, 1957) theory of social change.

Indifference. Fromm's early reference to our manifest indifference to our fellows (1947, p. 7) has more recently been examined experimentally by Latane and Darley (1970). The tendency to avoid "getting involved" and the concomitant refusal to give aid to others in need was explained in terms of diffuseness of responsibility.

Moral Neutrality. The concept of "value-freeness" is rooted in the traditional assumptions of the physical sciences, and is closely associated with the stress placed upon detachment, objectivity, neutrality, and amoral judgement (Hampden-Turner, 1970, pp. 27-28, Maslow, 1966, pp. 119-127; Skinner, 1971, pp. 101-126).

Conformity. In terms of the degree to which our culture values loyality behaviors, the investigations of Crutchfield (1955) and Milgram (1963) suggest that we tend to conform to the wishes of authority even at the expense of pain and injury to others.

Conservatism. This concept refers to a disposition toward low risk-taking, attitudinal and behavioral inflexibility, and intolerance for inter-individual, inter-group, and inter-cultural differences (Hampden-Turner, 1970; Rokeach, 1960; Allport, 1954; Adorno, et. al., 1950).

Closedness. Jourard's (1964) self-disclosure research, Goffman's (1959) investigation of masking behaviors, and Berne's theory of social games illustrate the norms of playing, concealing, and selectively revealing rather than being open to self and others.

Power and Control. The emphasis upon the malleability of objects, environments, and people is well documented (Skinner, 1971; Christie and Geis, 1970; Shostrom, 1967; Russell, 1938). These data reflect our cultural need to maintain positions of dominance; i.e., to compete in order to "win".[4] The emphasis is upon productivity.

Violence. Research conducted by Bandura, et. al. (1961), Lorenz (1966), Berkowitz (1964), and Slater (1970) lends credibility to the contention that we are essentially an aggressive and violence-oriented society.[5]

Emotional Control. Americans tend to place a value upon the suppression, repression, or sublimation of primary behaviors. The emphasis upon rationalism during the age of enlightenment, Freudian psychology, radical behaviorism, and American puritanism are contributing factors.[6] More recently, Spitz (1945) and Berne (1961) demonstrated the emotional destructiveness of such a surrogate process.

Anxiety. May's (1953, 1967) concept of anxiety refers to the manifest apprehension, dread, or chronic fear resulting from the uncertainty of the times.

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[4]See Sherif (1962) for an elaboration of organizational alternatives to zero-sum interaction; see also Schein's (1965) description of the effects of competition on individuals and groups.

[5]The implications of the research underscore the growing controversy over mass-media violence and its effect upon the socialization process. See Bronfenbrenner (1970, p. 103).

[6]This is discussed in more detail in the next section of the paper.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Recent emphasis upon the need to study interpersonal communication[7] parallels the increased attention paid to existential philosophy and humanistic psychology.[8] All three trends share similar, albeit common, historical evolutions that have been instrumental in the development of the climate described above. Five of the most significant factors in this history are: (1) the collapse of religion during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries;[9] (2) the traditional Western emphasis upon human rationality;[10] (3) the apparent failure of scientific technology to solve the problems of humanity as expected;[11] (4) the rapid development of a highly technological and impersonal, mass-production society;[12] and (5) the nature of traditional American values.[13] The impact of these

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[7]Illardo (1972); Stewart (1972); Giffin and Patton (1971); Keltner (1970); McCrosky, Larson, and Knapp (1971); Wenburg and Wilmot (1973); Stewart (1973).

[8]Schmidt (1970); Goble (1970); Brennecke and Amick (1971); Greening (1971); Johnson (1972).

[9]This event is characterized by the Nietzschean "God is dead" hypothesis.

[10]This emphasis refers to our heritage of intellectualism viz., the Age of Enlightenment. The assumption that rationality could overcome human problems was central to the writings of Locke, Berkley, Hume, Voltaire, and others. See Brennecke and Amick, (1971, pp. 31-32) and Cofer and Appley (1964, p. 657).

[11]Our culture has traditionally revered the so-called "hard" sciences at the expense of the social (Rogers and Roethlisberger, 1952, p. 49). This reverence grew with the evolution of an ostensibly value-free science that stressed the mechanics of control, prediction, strict causality, reductionism, and manipulation of the environment (Bertalanffy, 1952, p. 202). These "values of science" ultimately influenced "values in society" in terms of our tendency to value power and control, detachment in interpersonal relations, precision and invariability in behavior, and the manipulation of people as well as objects (see Hampden-Turner, 1970, pp. 1-15; Maslow, 1966; and Skinner, 1971).

[12]Representative of theorists concerned with the impact of this event upon the individual are Horney (1950), Fromm (1947), Barrett (1958, p. 28) and others who suscribe to the "self-alienation" hypothesis. The character of Meursault in Camus' The Stranger (1954) epitomizes this point of view. A second implication of this event is that dealing with the

influences upon the cultural climate discussed earlier has been profound. The evidence strongly suggests that its effects upon interpersonal behavior have become increasingly adverse. The nature of these effects on interpersonal behavior is detailed below.

EFFECTS ON INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOR

The four aims of interpersonal relationships -- expression, confirmation, influence, and creative work -- are not facilitated by the existing social climate. The following observations are advanced on the basis of the evidence presented above.

Expression of Feelings. The need to express one's emotions is clearly incongruent with the socio-cultural climate. There is considerable support for the conclusion that the environment tends to reward the suppression of emotion and punish (or ignore) its expression.

Confirmation of Social Reality. Prerequisite to a confirmation of social reality and self-reality is an open, interaction-oriented environment (Mead, 1934). A climate that encourages performance, concealment, selective revelation and masking tends to stifle, distort and ultimately destroy productive feedback processes. Such a closed system prevents a valid confirmation of a sense of "self" as well as an ability

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effects of mass-media communication upon the social process, and the consequent alterations in social perceptions of reality (see Scientific American's (September 1972) special issue dealing with communication. See also Bronfenbrenner, 1970, p. 103; Klapper, 1960; and Kraus, 1972).

[13] Reusch and Bateson (1951) specify the core concepts of puritan and pioneer morality, around which the premises of equality, sociality, success, and change revolve. Slater (1970) modified these to include competition (as opposed to community), uninvolvement (as opposed to engagement) and independence (as opposed to emotional dependence) (pp. 5-25). Also see Brennecke and Amick's (1971) discussion of American values attached to pragmatism, goal-setting and structuring, the work ethic, and the emphasis upon career achievement (pp. 7-12).

to trust and validate others in the social group.[14]

Change and Influence. The essence of incompetence is found in the inability to influence one's environment, to have a significant effect upon others, or to be able to act upon one's individual needs. The stress laid upon one-way strategies of manipulation and control of others discourages the potential for mutually influential interpersonal interactions.

Work and Creativity. Under present conditions, the "compete-achieve-work-die" (Illardo, 1972, p. 3) mentality prevails. In a conformity-oriented, mass-production climate, the potential for work is abundant -- the potential for creative individualism is not. The culture tends to reward productivity, as long as such productivity is in agreement with the goals and objectives established by the proper authority.

This review suggests that the socio-cultural environment is not conducive to the achievement of basic interpersonal needs and objectives. As a result, the behaviors necessary to achieve such objectives remain unrewarded by the system which disseminates most of the rewards. In terms of one major variable which influences human behavior -- environment -- the social system and its related institutions produce individuals who over emphasize task productivity, rational and intellective competence, controls, rewards of a tangible and immediate nature, and pyramidal organization. Since these patterns of behavior are learned (from older people, schools, churches, governments, business, media, etc.) a circle

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[14]See Watzlawick, et. al. (1967, pp. 84-90) for a discussion of the relationship between interpersonal trust and disconfirmation; also see Argyris (1968) for the effects of closedness on interpersonal competence and feedback.

of negative reinforcement[15] continuously encourages interpersonally dysfunctional behavior patterns. To this extent, interpersonal incompetence is a product of institutional incompetence.

The value of social institutions, wrote John Dewey, "is the extent to which they educate every individual to the full stature of his possibility" (cited in Benne, 1967, XI). Viewed from this criterion, the fact that so many people feel inept in their interpersonal lives indicates that much is unacceptable or valueless about the present conditions of our social institutions, particularly education. Rather than reaching the peak of their potentials, people feel lonely, guilty, pessimistic, and impotent in their interactions with other people. It is the major contention of this paper that our profession must dedicate its skills to the task of accomplishing planned change; change which is devoted to the removal of interpersonal incompetence and the facilitation of interpersonal competence.

How does one begin to remove interpersonal incompetence? Until such time as social institutions adapt to these changes will remain relatively undeveloped. But the first step in increasing the potential to meet these needs is to improve those behaviors over which the individual has control, his interpersonal skills. We agree with Argyris who observes that "to effect changes, organizational, technological, and interpersonal factors will require attention. The interpersonal factors, however, should come first, closely followed by the others" (1962, p. 54).

GOALS

In a planned change effort the most important step is the formation

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[15]See Wender's (1968) explanation of the concept of Deviation Amplifying Feedback.

of goals and outcomes toward which change is directed. While several recent essays (Illardo, 1972; Stewart, 1972; Mehrley and Backes, 1972) have produced valuable insights about the appealing qualities of interpersonal communication courses and the content and activities which should be included in such courses, no unified philosophy or framework based on an interpersonal and/or behavioral science paradigm has emerged. Such a framework is essential to the creation of a concentrated change effort, since objectives cannot be adequately formulated without it.

The philosophy which we advocate is grounded in the behavioral science conception of interpersonal competence -- a notion surprisingly neglected by our field. We believe that all undergraduate skill training in communication should be oriented toward the development of interpersonal competence. A description of what we mean by "interpersonal competence" should make it clear that most of what currently transpires in communication skills courses is not competence-directed. Our conception of competence, as a philosophy of communication education, is based on two key assumptions:

> Every human being is motivated to interact effectively with his environment; the drive to be interpersonally competent is the drive to produce effects on or to influence one's world.
>
> Individuals are not effective at birth, rather, social effectiveness is learned throughout life.

Every human being is motivated to interact effectively with his environment; the drive to be interpersonally competent is the drive to produce effects on or to influence one's world. An impressive amount of psychological, social psychological, and psychiatric theory supports the notion that human beings possess an innate drive toward effective

interaction with the external world. One of the first to write extensively about this was Sullivan (1953) who referred to it as the need for power.[16] Sullivan believed that, in the absence of excessive anxiety, the human organism actualizes its innate need to grow by fully developing its capacity for effective relations with others. To Sullivan the process of becoming human was the amelioration of one's ability to live with other people in a social organization.

Sullivan's views are validated, in a consensual sense, by the ideas expressed by other psychologists. Adler (1941), for example, stresses the perpetual effort exerted by the person from childhood to death in the quest to gain control of the environment. Erickson (1950) refers to this universal motive as "the quest for mastery." It is called "the desire for interpersonal fusion" by Fromm (1947), "harmony with the environment" by Vispo (1966), and "socioent.icity" (empathy) by Overstreet (1949). Similarly, Horney (1950) speaks of the need for self-realization as the development of one's human potentialities "...the faculty to express himself, and to relate himself to others..." (p. 17). Each of these formulations, along with such ideas as Roger's "openness to experience" (1959) and Jourard's (1971) need for self-disclosure, fit easily into Maslow's broader conceptualization of "growth needs" and "self-actualization" (1954). While Maslow's work is familiar to most students of interpersonal communication, the more obscure work of R. W. White (1959, 1960, 1963), in some ways indistinguishable from Maslow's, is more closely concerned with the drive to which interpersonal competence is related.

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[16] A detailed discussion of Sullivan's conception of interpersonal theories is presented in Caison (1969, pp. 23-56).

White's thesis is that careful study of exploratory and manipulative behavior in children, as well as young primates, reveals that much of interactive behavior is motivated by energies which are independent of instinctual drives. After extensive analysis of experimental results, White concluded that such learned skills as sucking, grasping, crawling, walking, focal attention and perception, language and thinking, anticipation, and effecting stimulus changes in the environment, are at best poorly explained by motivational theories based completely on organic drives. He proposed a new explanation of such behavior -- competence motivation or, as he termed it, effectance, the drive to ripen one's capacity to have an effect on his environment.

> I do not want to imply that young animals and children play and explore because of a desire to practice useful skills and prepare for future contingencies. They play and explore because it's fun -- because there is something inherently satisfying about it -- not because it is going to have some value at some future time (1963, p. 34).

The satisfaction derived from these kinds of activities was called by White the "feeling of efficacy" -- a basic biological endowment which describes the feelings that accrue when one has an effect or influence on something. Though White's monograph (1963) centered mostly on interaction with the inanimate environment, e.g., playing with building blocks, swimming to a raft, throwing a ball over the plate, etc., his ideas can be quite reasonably extrapolated to the social environment.

Beginning in adolescence, feelings of efficacy for most people are accomplished by having an effect on other people, i.e., successful social interaction. People feel efficacious when others listen and pay attention to them, when they are able to give and receive affection from others, when they can invest themselves successfully in inter-

personal relationships, or when, as Foote and Cottrell (1955, p. 41) observe, they escape progressively from the control of their environment and begin to control it.

Individuals are not effective at birth, rather social effectiveness is learned throughout life. Interpersonal competence, therefore, can be developed, frozen, enchanced, shifted, altered, or changed. There is also, of course, substantial variation between individuals in the degree to which they have developed their capacity to interact effectively, i.e., their interpersonal competence. Effectance was the term White used to define the energy which induces one to interact effectively; feeling of efficacy was the name for the kind of satisfaction acquired through successful interaction. The actualization of effectance is competence. Competence describes an individual's ability -- his existing capacity for effective interaction with his environment. Interpersonal competence is a measure of a person's aptitude or skill in relating to other people.

Interpersonal competence has been defined in slightly different terms, in each of the three major investigations which have dealt with it most directly. Viewing it as closely associated with self-esteem, White (1963) defined interpersonal competence as the capacity to have some effect on people. Foote and Cottrell (1955) construed it as one's skill at controlling the outcome of interactive episodes, but they pointed out that such social skills are essentially non-exploitative and ethically neutral. In the most recent study of interpersonal competence, Argyris (1962) defined it as the ability to achieve one's objectives, to maintain oneself internally, and to adapt to one's external environment.

Each definition helps to elucidate the nature of interpersonal competence, but none of them provide the specificity needed to distinguish between the inept and the competent interactant. How does one judge another person's competence in social interaction? To be able to discriminate between those who are capable and those who are inept, we need to specify a set of skills which provide an operational definition of interpersonal competence, a set of behaviors which can be learned and measured.

Interpersonal competence is closely associated with self-esteem or self-concept by almost every writer who discusses it. Since they have a higher probability than others of being interpersonally competent a beginning step at defining competence skills is to identify the characteristics of persons with high self-esteem. Hampden-Turner (1970), who employs self-esteem as the criterion for what he calls "experienced competence," uses the results of Rosenberg's landmark research on adolescent self-image to summarize the skills possessed by the psychosocially competent individual. Compared to others, those scoring in the top 1/7 of Rosenberg's sample:

1) Showed ease in talking and making friends,
2) Had less fear of competition,
3) Had little fear of criticism,
4) Were able to form close and supportive relationships with significant others,
5) Had the ability to examine and criticize themselves,
6) Were more assertive and less pretentious,
7) Were more goal-directed,
8) Self-disclosed more frequently,

9) Were more influential among peers,

10) Enjoyed maximum autonomy and minimum supervision.

Though missing from Rosenberg's findings, "social sensitivity" is one of the skills frequently mentioned in descriptions of effective interactants. To Foote and Cottrell it is the most crucial interpersonal component of competence:

> People appear to differ in their ability correctly to interpret the attitudes and intentions of others, in the accuracy with which they can perceive situations from other's standpoint, and thus anticipate and predict their behavior. This type of social sensitivity rests on what we call the empathic responses. Empathic responses are basic to "taking the role of the other" and hence to social interaction and the communicative processes upon which rests social integration...For this reason we must include empathic capacity as one of the essential components of interpersonal competence (1955, p. 54).

Operationally, skills of empathy are defined in terms of skills in perception. Massarick and Wechsler (1971) stipulate that empathy is "the extent to which one accurately recognizes someone else's reactions to oneself...the ability to assess correctly what another person thinks about you"(p. 191). It seems likely that persons with high self-esteem will possess greater social sensitivity. As Massarick and Wechsler observe, "the individual who has resolved most of his inner conflicts appears in a better position to direct his energies to the understanding of others."

The eleven skills presented above produce a clearer picture of what the interpersonally competent person looks like; each of these skills is potentially useful in enhancing interpersonal relations between people. It is essential to now make explicit a premise which sustained the development of the framework we will shortly propose. The improvement of interpersonal relationships requires authenticity;

interpersonal competence cannot be developed and interpersonal relationships cannot be improved except under conditions which promote authenticity.[17] For this reason, the essential competence skills are only those which contribute to increased interpersonal authenticity, a term we use synonymously with competence.

The specific skills which we advocate as the optimum behavioral objectives for communication education are those which promote authentic relationships. Each of these behaviors is directly observable,[18] and each one can also be reliably measured by self-report information (Kolb and Boyatzis, 1971). In addition, Argyris (1965) has completed extensive research which supports the hypothesis that these behaviors vary substantially from person-to-person and that they can be learned, i.e., acquired, changed, altered, etc.

The skills which we speak of were first proposed by Argyris (1962) and have been developed theoretically by Hampden-Turner in his model of psycho-social development (1970). From their standpoint interpersonal competence is a measure of one's capacity to

(a) GIVE AND RECEIVE NONEVALUATIVE DESCRIPTIVE FEEDBACK;

(b) OWN AND HELP OTHERS TO OWN TO THEIR VALUES, ATTITUDES, IDEAS, AND FEELINGS;

(c) EXPERIMENT AND HELP OTHERS TO EXPERIMENT WITH NEW VALUES, ATTITUDES, IDEAS, AND FEELINGS; AND

(d) TAKE RISKS WITH NEW VALUES, ATTITUDES, IDEAS, AND FEELINGS.

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[17] Our conception of authenticity is similar to the one proposed by Argyris (1962) who defines an authentic relationship as one "in which an individual enhances his sense of self -- and other awareness and acceptance in such a way that others can do the same.

[18] They can be reliably measured by in-person category interaction analysis. See Argyris (1965a).

METHODS OF ACQUIRING COMPETENCE SKILLS

Individuals who have learned to give and receive descriptive feedback, to own and help others to own to their values and feelings, to experiment with new values and behaviors, and to invest and take risks with attitudes and ideas, are interpersonally competent. Research profiles of such persons[19] indicate that they can give and receive help, sense a continuing process of growth, know how to learn, can solve interpersonal problems so that they remain solved, and recognize how they affect other people, as well as how they are affected by them (Argyris, 1962, 1964, 1965a,b,c, 1968, Kolb and Boyatzis, 1972).

As communication educators, the most difficult challenge we face is that of creating classroom conditions which facilitate the procurement of these skills. We have asked this question: should speech communication be dedicated to interpersonal competency training and answered yes. Now we ask how. What classroom conditions promote situations where the learner can be opened up for learning, where he can share, give, invest, risk, and receive, the things which will make him more competent?

There are three classes of variables which influence learning in an institutional setting: the classroom environment, the teacher and his behavior, and the learner and his behavior. Interpersonal competence acquisition is dependent upon the values or characteristics assigned to each of these

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[19] Argyris (1962, 1965a,b,c, 1968) has developed procedures for calculating an individual's interpersonal competence score. These procedures are explained more fully in the final section of this paper.

variable classes, as they interact with each other. When we refer to "assigned values," we mean the attitudes and behavior, the needs or goals, that the teachers and learners bring to the situation. The optimum conditions for competence acquisition are similar to the maximum conditions for group productivity. There is a considerable amount of research data in group dynamics which suggests that a group's productivity is dependent upon the norms which regulate the group's behavior (Homans, 1950, 1962; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Shaw and Costanzo, 1971). In the same fashion, the outcomes of a learning situation are dependent upon the norms which regulate the learner's behavior.[20] The teacher, the learner, and the learning environment each contribute substantially to learning climate norms. The norms which appear to have the greatest impact on interpersonal competence acquisition are:

Who defines the learning goals? The goals of the learning situation may be set by the teacher or by the learner; or they may be the result of a collaborative effort. Kolb and his associates (1972) have demonstrated empirically that learning is guided by an individual's felt needs and goals. Learners have more involvement in objectives which they set for themselves; ones which they feel close to. Therefore, learner initiated goals, since they tend to be more intimately related to the learner's individual needs, are more likely to produce competency behaviors.

How much learner participation is permitted, encouraged, or demanded? Learning is an active rather than a passive process, yet it is safe to say

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[20]We subscribe to Homans' well-known definition of a norm as "an idea in the minds of the members of a group, an idea that can be put in the form of a statement specifying what the members . . . should do, ought to do, are expected to do, under given circumstances . . . [It is a norm] only if any departure of real behavior from the norm is followed by some punishment (1950, p. 123).

that most institutional learning environments are still governed by the misguided assumption that learning can be accomplished through the passive reception of knowledge. A person cannot acquire interpersonal competence skills without participating actively in learning experiences which provide opportunities to learn and practice these skills. The learner must be willing to generate behavior from which he and others can learn.

Who is responsible for learning? In the traditional classroom, the learner is told what to learn, how to learn, and how to feel about what is learned. The techniques for learning are disseminated by the teacher toward the learner. The teacher feels responsible for giving information, setting goals, providing the methods and opportunities for learners to reach the goals, and for testing and evaluation. In the competency-based classroom, responsibility rests squarely on the shoulders of the learner. He sets his own goals and the paths to those goals; and he does so in light of his own felt needs. The teacher is no longer merely a knowledge giver, but now is an equal partner in the learning transaction. He too can have learning objectives. These can be communicated openly to the other learners, who are no longer merely learners -- but human beings, persons.

How are emotions handled? Classrooms which focus on the development of interpersonal competence require a high level of emotional involvement by both teachers and learners. When learners are risking, experimenting, and helping they are involved in a highly emotional experience. They react as total persons, with feelings as well as ideas. Teachers and learners together seek awareness of the blocks to effective learning. Many of the

blocks are emotional ones, yet learners in many classrooms are rewarded at least not punished, for suppressing their emotions. They are not opened up to their own feelings of threat and defense and thus they cannot experience the psychological success necessary for the acquisition of interpersonal competence. When feelings are openly disclosed and shared with others in a descriptive, non-evaluative manner, threat and defensiveness is minimized enhancing the potential for competence behaviors.

Learner defined goals, learner centered responsibility, active participation in experience-based learning, and mutual sharing and disclosure of feelings have been offered as the optimum norms for the facilitated interpersonal competence. It was mentioned earlier that the teacher, the learner and the learning environment itself each contribute substantially to the creation of these norms. Argyris, Kolb and his associates,, and many of the leading spokesmen for the well-known National Training Laboratory (e. g., Lippitt, Bradford, and Benne) have written extensively on the prerequisites for these conditions. Essential ones for competence training include:

(1) The learner must have an authentic desire to learn; he must want to become more interpersonally competent.

(2) The learner must be motivated by growth needs, rather than survival or deficiency needs. He must have at least a minimum degree of self-acceptance and be moving toward becoming himself. He must feel safe enough to assess his own values and assumptions about himself and other people.

(3) The learner must genuinely want to help others to learn; he must take responsibility for sharing in the learning of others.

(4) Teachers must possess a minimum level of interpersonal competence. Regardless of what norms are established, learners will initially look to the leader, in this case the teacher, for model behavior. The teacher will ordinarily receive little positive feedback about his success as a learning facilitator. He must be able to accept the mistrust and attacks presented by the learners and regress to survival behaviors only minimally. In short, he must be able to deal effectively with the interpersonal problems which inevitably arise.

(5) Activities in the classroom should center only on directly observable units of behavior. Evaluative inferences about behavior should be avoided. Individuals are much more likely to experience the psychological success necessary for competence acquisition when feedback is minimally distorted and minimally evaluative (Argyris, 1970). Learners should focus on behavior which can be consensually validated.

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

According to Blake and Mouton (1964), the final element in proposing a program of planned change is the selection of <u>methods</u> for its implementation. Our research suggests three self-report and one group observation system for the measurement and evaluation of competence acquisition.

The first instrument -- the Interpersonal Communication Inventory -- was developed by Bienvenu in 1969 and reported in a recent issue of the Journal of Communication (1971). This self-report questionaire includes forty items that cluster around eight dimensions of communication behavior patterns: listening, self-disclosure, frankness/directness/confrontation, self-acceptance/confidence/safety, empathy/interest, control of emotion, clarity of expression, and feedback. The forty items are designed to obtain three possible responses from a subject: YES (usually), NO (seldom), or SOMETIMES. Each item response has been assigned a single weighting of from 0 to 3. The forty questions are supplemented by ten open-end questions as well as demographic information.[21] An example of a question is illustrated below:

	YES	NO	SOME-TIMES
32. Do others seem to be listening when you are talking?			

Hughey's UNM Conversation Self Report Inventory (1971) contains fifty items designed to assess patterns of conversational behaviors. Each question is followed by four possible responses. For example, the first item is reproduced below:

1. When there is a difference of opinion I believe most conversations are successful when:
   1. each speaker is direct and to the point.

[21] A copy of this questionaire may be obtained from its author by writing to Dr. M. J. Bienvenu, Sr., Department of Sociology and Social Work, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, Louisiana (71457).

2. an exchange of feelings on the matter takes place.
3. people change their minds on the topic in one way or another.
4. people agree on the issues in question.[22]

This instrument does not demonstrate the methodological sophistication found in the Bienvenu (1971) questionaire, thus requiring much more research directed toward the establishment of validity and reliability.[23]

The final self-report instrument developed by Kolb and Boyatzis (1971, 347-348) was designed to gather data on feedback-helping behaviors.[24] This sociometric model integrates a number of the behavioral dimensions directly relatable to competence acquisition behaviors, and to that extent shows much promise for competence research. Simplicity in scoring combined with theoretical breadth suggest the use of this instrument in future investigations.

The group observation system selected for the measurement of behavioral change is that developed by Argyris (1962, 1964, 1965a,b,c, 1968, 1970). Primary factors in the selection of this category system are: (1) its methodological and conceptual similarity to the behavioral skills proposed in this paper; (2) its credible theoretical origins (c.f., White, 1959, 1960, 1963; Foote and Cottrell, 1955); and (3) its relative ease of application to the

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[22]For detailed instructions on scoring procedures, etc., write to Dr. James Hughey, Department of Speech Communication, Oklahoma State University.

[23]The nature of the four responses suggests multidimensional items within a single question; principal factors solution models of factor analysis offer a source of amelioration of these difficulties.

[24]See Table 1 for a reproduction of this instrument.

classroom (as well as research) setting.[25]

Table 2 illustrates twelve categories of behavior for Level I: owning and not owning up, openness and not open, experimenting and rejecting experimenting, helping and not helping others to own up, helping and not helping others to be open, and helping and not helping others to experiment (take risks). Six more categories refer to normative behaviors: individuality, conformity, concern, antagonism, trust, and mistrust. Each of the eighteen categories may apply to either ideational-intellectual (i) behaviors or emotional-feeling (f) behaviors. Based upon Argyris' concept of "pyramidal values" (1965a, 14-15), ideational behaviors are generally less difficult to demonstrate than feeling ones. Thus, potency of categories (viz., weights) is based on hypothesized performance difficulty (see Table 2). This model may be applied to obtain individual, group, or system scores.[26] The Argyris model therefore demonstrates maximal heuristic value, facility, and reliability in the assessment and evaluation of individual and/or collective competence.

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[25]Of particular relevance to the model being proposed in this monograph is its applicability to three central units of analysis: individual, group, and inter-group (Argyris, 1970, 38-47). Second, scoring procedures remain relatively uninvolved; i.e., frequency of the occurrance of behaviors is multiplied by a single weight (potency) and totaled for each of four categories -- Individual or Interpersonal Positive, Individual or Interpersonal Negative, Norms Positive, and Norms Negative. Finally, behaviors are directly observable thus facilitating the training of observers (inter-observer reliability for close to 5,000 units of analysis was 86% agreement or above). See Argyris (1965a, 1-28) for a detailed discussion of the category system, scoring procedures, and experimental methodology.

[26]See Argyris (1965b, 76) for a list of ten indices, or criteria, for group competence.

CONCLUSION

The program of planned change which has been outlined in this paper is designed to produce a more satisfying and meaningful set of skill objectives for undergraduate instruction in communication. Bringing about this change is a serious challenge to those of us who believe that people can become more human and thus more competent in their interpersonal lives.

The implementation of this change will require considerable alteration in the training of professional teachers in our field. To accomplish teacher as well as learner changes, we will need to have consensus in response to the question: how does one behave when he has achieved excellence in interpersonal communication? We believe that descriptive feedback, owning, experimenting, and risking are the essential interpersonal skills. The future effectiveness of interpersonal communication instruction rests on how accurately we have conceived of the problem and how skillfully we can implement the change.

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Table 1

Description of Feedback Dimensions

Category of Dimension	*Explanation or Description*
LIKE-DISLIKE NEUTRAL	Do you like the *person* who gave you this feedback? Do you dislike him? Are you neutral towards him? Rate on scale −2 to +2.
VERBAL-NON-VERBAL	Was this feedback *spoken* to you (VERBAL), or was it communicated through gestures, facial expressions, nods, etc. (NON-VERBAL)? Check one or the other.
STRONG-WEAK	This dimension refers to the intensity of the feedback. Was it emphatic and vigorous, or was it expressed mildly? Check one or the other.
HERE-AND-NOW	This dimension refers to the content of the feedback. Did it refer to events or behavior taking place now or recently in the group (HERE-AND-NOW), or did it refer to things in the past not shared by other group members (THERE-AND-THEN)? Check one or the other.
POSITIVE-NEGATIVE	Did the feedback agree with you or encourage you? Did you like to hear it (POSITIVE)? Or did it disagree with you, discourage you? Was it "painful" to hear (NEGATIVE)? Check one or the other.
SUPPORTED	This dimension refers to the reaction of other group members to the feedback. Did they corroborate, agree with or support it, or did they disagree or remain silent about it (NON-SUPPORTED)? Check one or the other.
OWNED-NOT-OWNED	This dimension refers to the person giving you the feedback. Did he attach himself personally to the feedback; did he make it clear that it was his own opinion or feeling (OWNED)? Or was it not clear that the feedback represented the giver's own opinion (NOT-OWNED)? *Examples:* Owned—"I think you talk too much." (or) "Nobody in this group listens to me." Not-owned—"Does the group feel that John talks too much?: (or) "Isn't this group supposed to listen to people?" Check one or the other. Hint—not-owned feedback is often in question form.
DIRECTED-NON-DIRECTED	This dimension refers to *you* as the receiver of feedback. Was the feedback directed or applied to you personally; did it have your "name" on it (DIRECTED)? Or did you have to make the application to yourself from a general statement (NON-DIRECTED)? *Examples:* Directed—"John Smith is not sensitive to my feelings." Non-directed—"Some people in this group are not sensitive to my feelings." Check one or the other.
EVALUATIVE-NON-EVALUATIVE	This dimension applies to the pressure of an implicit or explicit value judgment *in* the feedback. *Example:* Evaluative—"I think it's wrong that you should try to control the group." Non-evaluative—"I think you are trying to control the group." Check one or the other. Hint—value judgements are often expressed by tone of voice as well as in words.
SPONTANEOUS-SOLICITED	Solicited feedback is feedback that you specifically asked for. Spontaneous feedback is feedback that someone gives you without being asked. Check one or the other.
INCLUSION-DIRECTED	Was the feedback related to any aspect of your participation or non-participation in the group, acceptance or rejection by the group, interaction with the group, etc.?
CONTROL-DIRECTED	Did the feedback pertain to any aspect of your influence, lack of influence, leadership, control in the group, etc.?
AFFECTION-DIRECTED	Was the feedback related to your warmth, friendliness, unfriendliness, openness, etc.?
RELATED TO YOUR SELF-CHANGE PROJECT	Was the feedback related to the self-change project you have chosen?

Name _____ Date _____

I. List below in boxes 1, 2, and 3, the three pieces of feedback from today's session that stand out most in your mind. Do this by recording in these boxes the initials of the giver of the feedback. You may also record here the central theme of the feedback if you wish. Try to put the feedback that stands out most in your mind in box 1, etc. A piece of feedback is defined here as a piece of information from one individual. A giver may be listed as many times as appropriate.

II. Beginning with column 1, go down the column checking those categories which describe the feedback you received. Descriptions of each category appear on the cover sheet. When you have completed column 1, continue in the same fashion in columns 2 and 3.

	1	2	3
Using a −2 to +2 scale, indicate your feelings about the person who gave you the feedback. −2 = dislike very much; −1 = dislike slightly; 0 = neutral to; +1 = like somewhat; +2 = like very much.			
VERBAL (spoken feedback) NON-VERBAL (gestured feedback)			
STRONG (intense, vigorous feedback) WEAK (mild feedback)			
HERE-AND-NOW (feedback about event or behavior in group) THERE-AND-THEN (about event outside of group experience)			
POSITIVE (pleasant to hear) NEGATIVE (unpleasant)			
SUPPORTED (corroborated by others) NON-SUPPORTED (not corroborated)			
OWNED (giver makes it clear that feedback represents his own opinion) NOT OWNED (not clear that feedback represents the giver's own opinion)			
DIRECTED (giver applies remark directly to you) NON-DIRECTED (from general statement, you make application to yourself)			
EVALUATIVE (giver is making value judgment) NON-EVALUATIVE (giver is not making value judgment)			
SOLICITED (you requested feedback) SPONTANEOUS (you did not request feedback)			
Feedback refers to your participation, non-participation, interaction, etc. (INCLUSION)			
Feedback refers to your leadership, influence, lack of influence, etc. (CONTROL)			
Feedback refers to your friendliness, unfriendliness, etc. (AFFECTION)			
Related to your self change project			

III. Check below the names of the people you gave feedback to (G) and received feedback from (R) in today's session.

Name	G	R

Name	G	R

IV. How close are you to your goal today? Rate on a scale 1 to 9 with 1 being farthest from your goal and 9 being closest to it. _____

Table 2

CATEGORIES OF BEHAVIOR RELATED TO
INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE
AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

	LEVEL I				LEVEL II		
	INDIVIDUAL	WEIGHT	INTERPERSONAL	WEIGHT	NORMS	WEIGHT	OUTPUTS
PLUS	Experimenting	i 4 f 16	Help others to experiment	i 7 f 16	Trust	i 4 f 16	
	Openness	i 2 f 10	Help others to be open	i 6 f 10	Concern	i 1 f 10	Effectiveness Increased
	Owning	i 1 f 9	Help others to own	i 5 f 9	Individuality	i 2 f 8	
ZERO							
	Not owning	i -8 f -14	Not help others to own	i -3 f -5	Conformity	i -2 f -8	
MINUS	Not open	i -9 f -15	Not help others to be open	i -3 f -6	Antagonism	i -4 f -12	Decreased Effectiveness
	Rejecting Experimenting	i -14 f -16	Not help others to experiment	i -4 f -7	Mistrust	i -6 f -16	

Performance Difficulty ↑

Defensiveness ↓

Adapted from C. Argyris. Explorations in Interpersonal Competence-I. Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 1, 1, 1965, 58-83.